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Turkey's Relations With Iran

An Intelligence Memorandum

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April 1980

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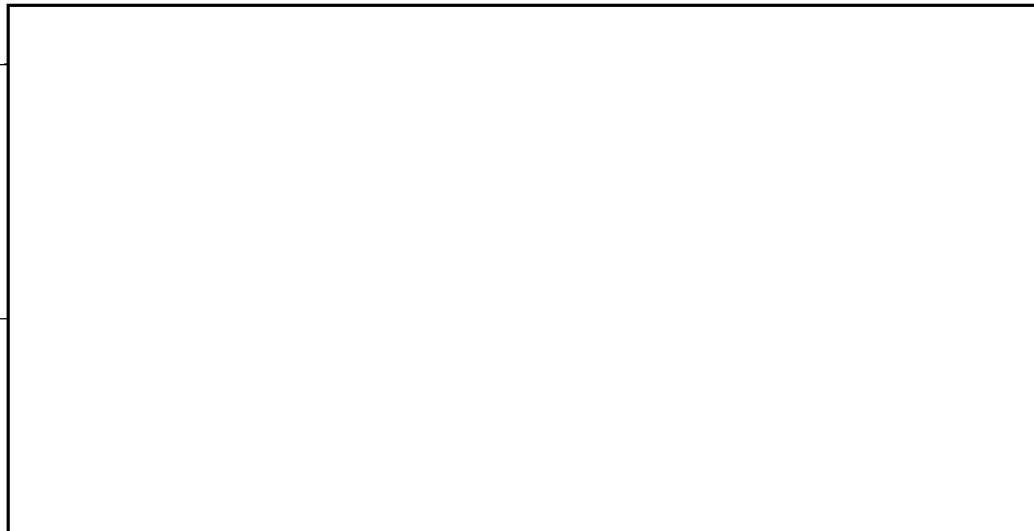
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Turkey's Relations With Iran (U)

Summary

The relative calm that characterized early Turkish reactions to the Iranian revolution has given way to growing concern. Ankara's initial response was influenced in part by a perception that its strategic importance to the West had been boosted at a time when it was seeking massive economic and military assistance from its Western allies.

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Turkish leaders have adopted a cautious approach toward the Khomeini regime and exhort their allies to do likewise. Although the principles of Iran's theocratic and autocratic regime run counter to Turkey's secular and democratic outlook, the Turks have sought to maintain, and even expedite, bilateral trade; thus far they have resisted US requests for economic sanctions against Tehran.

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The Turks will attempt to maintain a businesslike relationship with whatever regime is in power in Tehran because they realize that a hostile posture would harm Turkey more than Iran. Ankara will also strive to be responsive to its allies, particularly if they approach unanimity on a particular course of action toward Iran.

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This paper was written by [redacted] Western Europe Division, Office of Political Analysis. It was coordinated with the National Intelligence Officer for Western Europe, the Office of Economic Research, and the Directorate of Operations. Research was completed on 10 April 1980. Questions and comments are welcome and should be directed to Chief, Western Europe Division, OPA, [redacted]

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Turkey's Relations With Iran (U)

Background

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The RCD protocol was signed in 1964 by Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan to foster closer cooperation among member states in the movement of goods, economic development projects, and cultural exchanges.¹ CENTO, which evolved from the 1955 Mutual Cooperation Pact, aimed at greater military collaboration among Turkey, Iran, and its other members.²

In the 1960s Ankara's link to NATO and its formidable, US-equipped armed forces gave the Turks military superiority over their CENTO partners in the area.

The Iranian Revolution

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The victory in January 1979 of the anti-Shah forces in Iran provided both opportunities and perils for Turkey. The fall of the Shah enhanced Turkey's geopolitical importance and hence its leverage with NATO

have expressed an interest in reviving the organization by envisaging its expansion to other countries of the region.

² CENTO stemmed from the Mutual Cooperation Pact signed between Turkey and Iraq in 1955 and was then known as the Baghdad Pact. Pakistan and Iran acceded to the protocol later in 1955. The military alliance became known as CENTO after Iraq withdrew in 1959. Cooperation did not reach the anticipated level, however, and Iran and Pakistan withdrew from the moribund organization in March 1979. Shortly thereafter, CENTO officially ceased to exist. (U)

At the same time, the Khomeini regime's withdrawal from CENTO and its general anti-Western rhetoric have left Turkey in an exposed position.

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Coping With Khomeini Given these concerns, Ankara's approach has been to accept the termination of security ties with Iran and to work for the establishment of cordial political relations, while preserving and expanding economic ties. So far,

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The Turkish Ambassador was the first to be received by Khomeini after the revolution, and the Turkish Foreign Minister visited Tehran in the fall of 1979.

³ The Alevis, who are not ethnically distinct from the Turks and are often mistaken for Shiite Muslims, number about 11 million, or 25 percent of Turkey's 45 million population. They follow a syncretic religious doctrine that incorporates elements of shamanism and Christianity into Islam. (U)

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25X1 Turkish-Iranian economic ties, traditionally steadier than political relations, received a boost last January when the two countries signed an agreement providing for the exchange of some 2 million tons of Iranian oil in return for Turkish wheat and other foodstuffs.

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encouragement of their government, meanwhile, Turkish firms are attempting to make inroads into the Iranian market, where wide gaps have been left by foreign firms that pulled out after the fall of the Shah. Finally,

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**Turkey, Iran,
and the West**

25X1 Regional and East-West tensions heightened by the Iranian revolution and the subsequent Soviet invasion of Afghanistan have brought into sharp relief Turkey's central dilemma: the conflicting demands and pressures of being both a Western and a Middle Eastern power.

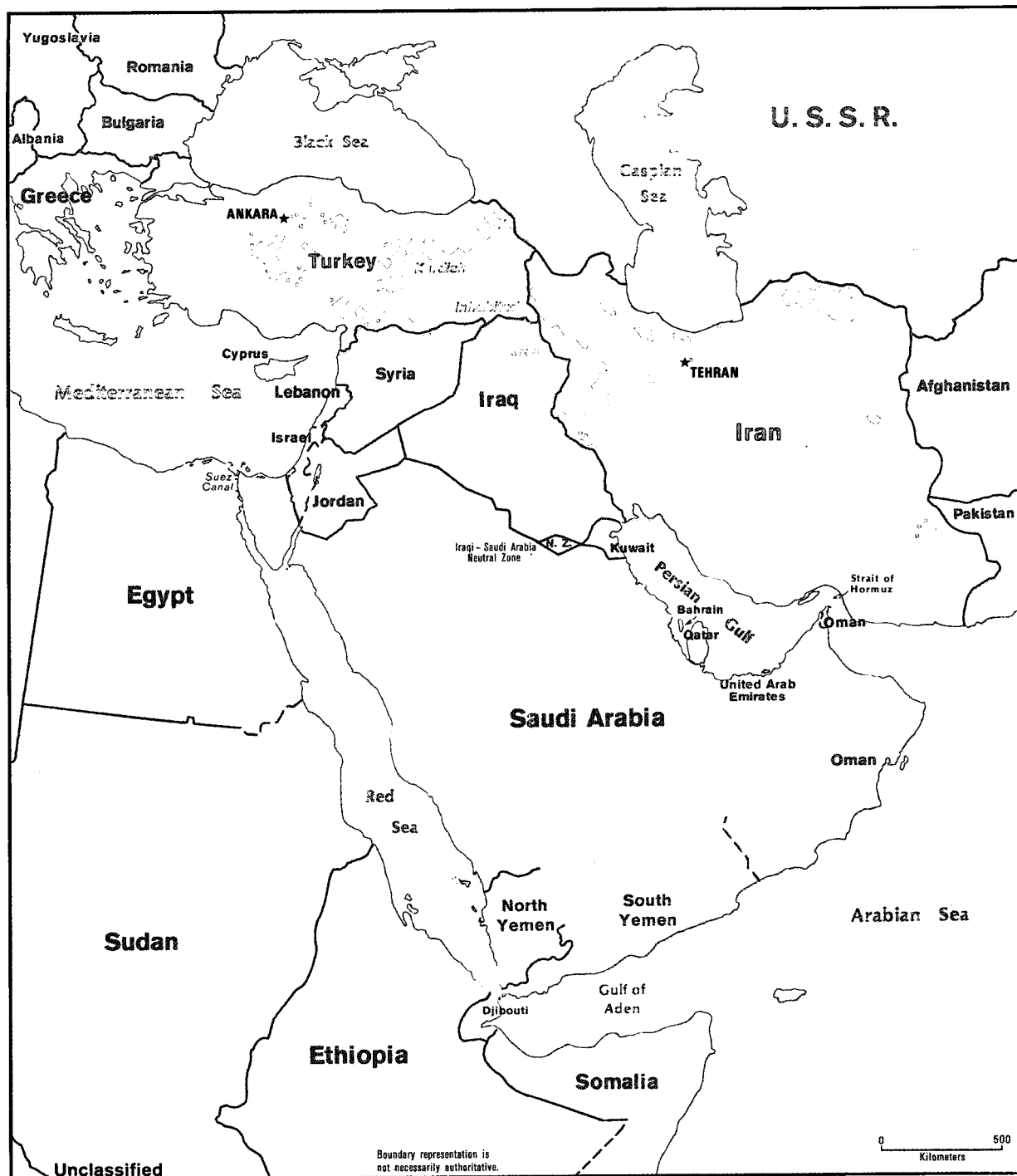
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The diminution of pro-Western sentiment in Turkey, together with the increase in power and influence of the oil producing states in the region, have made the Turks increasingly reluctant to play the role of Western agent.

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Outlook

The outlook for Turkish-Iranian relations will remain murky because of the uncertainties of the political situations in both countries. Political relations

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On the other hand, if events in Iran were to stimulate minority and sectarian unrest in Turkey and help push the level of political violence to the point

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In the absence of more political upheaval in Iran and a Turkish decision to participate in sanctions, economic relations are likely to expand steadily.

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25X1 dangers inherent in their exposed position call for a compensatory increase
in Western military and economic assistance. [REDACTED]

25X1 [REDACTED]

25X1 Turkish position could change if the Iranian revolution were to take a
decidedly anti-Turkish turn or if Ankara were to decide that the costs of
ignoring Soviet bellicosity in the region outweighed the benefits. [REDACTED]

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